

AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES NEWSLETTER

July 2014

The U.S. Embassy is transmitting the following monthly newsletter via its warden system as a public service to U.S. citizens in Mongolia. Please feel free to disseminate this message to U.S. citizens in your organizations or to other Americans you know.



Become a fan of
U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar,
Consular Section on
Facebook.

American Citizens' Visa Hour
Every **Tuesday at 4:00pm** at
the Consular Section except
on U.S./local holidays.

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Did you know...

Although Americans enjoy great travel freedom, a U.S. passport is not the strongest. The strongest passports are the United Kingdom, Finland, and Sweden, whose passport holders can travel to 173 countries without a visa. Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, and the U.S. are also strong, with visa-free access to 172 countries.



Announcing a science and technology competition for young Mongolian entrepreneurs and innovators!

Do you know any entrepreneurial Mongolians (ages 18-40)? The Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) Tech-I competition is a yearly competition for science and technology entrepreneurs from around the world. Aspiring innovators pitch their ideas online, and the global voting public and experts choose thirty contestants to receive an all-expense paid trip to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit to showcase their ventures and receive intensive training. GIST Tech-I winners, selected by mentors and entrepreneurs at the Summit, win mini-grants and receive up to 3 months of one-on-one mentoring.

The 2014 Tech-I Competition will have two tracks for which Science & Technology (S&T) entrepreneurs can apply: the Idea Stage and the Startup Stage.

The Idea Stage is perfect for entrepreneurs who have an idea or prototype but who have not launched their company.

The Startup Stage is designed for new companies that are further along the growth process—for example, companies that have completed some market analysis, have a launch timeline or have recently launched a product/service for distribution, or have a realistic strategy to sell a product/service.

Applications should be submitted online, and information about the program and how to apply is at: <http://www.aaas.org/tech-i/howto>. The application deadline is July 21. You must be a citizen of an eligible country, and Mongolia is eligible.

Welcome our new Vice Consul!

At the end of April, Vice Consul Patrick Rumley arrived in Ulaanbaatar as the newest American member of the U.S. Embassy Consular Section. This is Patrick's first post as a Foreign Service Officer. Previously, he was a project manager at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and worked in IT in the private sector. Patrick and his family are settling into life in Mongolia and have been able to travel outside Ulaanbaatar to Terelj, Erdenet, and Khustain Nuruu. Patrick will be posted in Mongolia for two years, and hopes to have the opportunity to visit many other aimags in Mongolia and meet with our American Citizen residents of those districts.

Ask The Consul:

My visa application was refused, but the visa officer didn't even look at the documents I brought to the interview.

Yes, this is a common misconception, but actually, applying for a U.S. nonimmigrant visa (NIV) is generally not a documentary process. In fact, the most critical element of the NIV application process is the personal interview. During this interview the consular officer will ask you a number of questions to determine if you are qualified for the visa for which you are applying. In most NIV cases this means you have to demonstrate that you "overcome the presumption of immigrant intent"; that you are not going to stay in the U.S. permanently, and that your trip is really temporary.

As I mentioned in a previous column on "214(b)", consular officers make this determination by looking at a multitude of factors including your family, social and economic ties to your home country, your financial situation and your purpose of travel, to name just a few examples. And while documents, such as bank statements, property deeds, salary slips or business licenses may help support statements you make during the interview, officers rarely rely on documentation to make their determination.

Why is that? Firstly, because documents are often unreliable. While your documentation may be genuine, we are often presented with fake or altered documents by applicants during interviews. Secondly, what is at issue during the visa application is intent, and ...think about it, but a document alone can never really establish or prove your intentions.

You were correct to bring supporting documentation to the interview of course, in case the officer would have needed or wanted to refer to them, but the officer will, in the majority of cases, place more weight on your statements, demeanor and body language during the interview.

Remember also that the consular officer already has a lot of information about your situation from the answers you provided in the DS-160 application form.

If a consular officer made a decision in your case without reviewing any documents, it was because the circumstances of your situation were clear from the interview.

If your visa was refused, it is highly unlikely that that any document you could provide would have altered the officer's decision in your case. So, if you are thinking of reapplying, please do not do so only to present additional documentation. Unless your overall circumstances have significantly changed, a second visa application shortly following after the first is unlikely to be successful.

Very few documents are actually "required", and if a "required" document is missing, the officer will give you an opportunity to present it. In such a case your application will be placed on hold, or into a "pending" status, and no final decision will be made at the time of your interview. Here in Mongolia, the officer will usually give you a yellow piece of paper and list on it what you need to provide.

Happy 4th of July!

Independence Day honors the birthday of the United States of America and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.



This year, the Embassy celebrates the 4th of July under the theme "Eye on Innovation".

For more details, please visit:

<http://mongolia.usembassy.gov/independence-day.html>

Attention Voters!

Vote! It's fast, it's free, and it's accessible.

Complete a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) every year, even if you have voted overseas before.



It's fast: For fastest delivery, choose electronic delivery of your absentee ballot from your home state, and include an email address on your FPCA.

It's Free: Return your FPCA or completed ballot to a U.S. embassy or consulate for mail delivery to the United States free of charge via diplomatic pouch. Your postage-paid return envelopes are available from FVAP.gov.

It's accessible: U.S. citizens can drop off an FPCA or completed ballot in person at any embassy or consulate during public hours.

Need help? You can receive in-person assistance from our Embassy Voting Assistance Officers or drop off FPCA forms during American Citizen Service hours, held every Monday and Thursday from 1:00-3:00pm at the Embassy. No appointment is needed. (NOTE: It is acceptable for private U.S. citizens or U.S. citizens' groups to collect FPCAs and deliver them to the Embassy on behalf of other eligible voters, as long as each FPCA is in its own U.S. postage-paid envelope.)

SECURITY ADVISORY—Be Aware of Pickpocketing During Nadaam Festival

Pickpockets and bag slashers are a recent and growing problem, although theft is seldom violent against foreigners, just opportunistic. However it gets worst during Naadam Festival as pickpockets lurk around the Sukbaatar Square and stadium – keep close watch of your camera. Beware of pickpockets who masquerade as coin sellers.

Warden Volunteers Still Needed!

We are searching for volunteers to act as wardens in Mongolia. If you are interested, please send an email to ulaanbaataracs@state.gov.

The United States warden system is not for the benefit of the Embassy, but for the American citizens living in Mongolia. Wardens in each district play an important role in the event of an emergency by contacting American citizens residing in Mongolia to ensure timely distribution of important information. It is a way for Americans to look after each other, which is particularly important in a place like Mongolia due to the distances between cities and difficult travel conditions.

The Embassy would appreciate your consideration for this important role. It also could be a great opportunity for you to take a few hours out of each quarter to become more familiar with American citizen neighbors,

*U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Mongolia are reminded to enroll with the U.S. Embassy by entering your travel itinerary and contact information into the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.*



Don't forget to enter your email address, local address and phone number, if known, as well as your expected departure date from Mongolia. Entering your expected departure date will indicate

TRAVEL WARNINGS

Chad June 30, 2014
Honduras June 24, 2014
Kenya June 19, 2014
Republic of South Sudan June 12, 2014

TRAVEL ALERT

Thailand June 20, 2014
Russian Federation June 12, 2014

For additional information about these travel warnings and alerts, please visit this website: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>.

Embassy Contact Information

American Citizen Services
U.S. Embassy
Denver Street #3
11th Micro District
Ulaanbaatar 14190 Mongolia
Tel: 976-7007-6001
Fax: 976-7007-6014
After-hours emergency number: 9911-4168
E-mail: UlaanbaatarACS@state.gov